

Oenomaus of Gadara, *Detection of Deceivers, or Charlatans Exposed* (Γοήτων φώρα)

As cited in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* = *Preparation for the Gospel* 5.18-36 and 6.7.
Translation with modifications from Gifford, *Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae Praeparationis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903).

Introductory note (by Philip A. Harland):

Oenomaus (Oinomaos) of Gadara in Palestine was a Cynic philosopher (probably in the second century CE, during the reign of Hadrian) who wrote a work against deceptive divination practices and procedures at oracles, including those at Delphi and Claros (Klaros). The work is only preserved in extracts by the church historian, Eusebius (early fourth century CE). For clarity, here I present Eusebius' own comments in italics and those attributed to Oenomaus of Gadara in regular font. Oracles cited by Oenomaus are indented. I have modernized Gifford's English translation.

Book 5

[18] *[Eusebius]* But since the matters which have been mentioned are not known to all, it seems to me well to pass from this point to subjects which are self-evident to all the learned, and to examine the oracular responses of most ancient date which are repeated in the mouth of all Greeks, and are taught in the schools of every city to those who resort to them for instruction.

Take up again therefore the ancient records from the beginning, and observe what kind of answer the Pythian god gives to the Athenians when afflicted with a pestilence on account of the death of Androgeus. The Athenians were all suffering from a pestilence for one man's death, and thought to receive the help of the gods.

What advice then does this saviour and god give them? To cultivate justice and benevolence and all other virtue in future, some one will perhaps suppose; or to repent of the offence, and to perform some holy and religious rites, as the gods would thereby be propitiated. No, nothing of the kind.

For what indeed did their admirable gods, or rather their utterly wicked daemons, care for these things? So again they say what is natural and familiar to themselves, things merciless and cruel and inhuman, plague upon plague, and many deaths for one.

In fact Apollo bids them every year send of their own children seven grown youths, and as many maidens, fourteen innocent and unconcerned persons for one. and that not once only but every year, to be sacrificed in Crete in the presence of Minos: so that even to the time of Socrates, more than five hundred years afterwards, this dreadful and most inhuman tribute was still kept in memory among the Athenians. And this it was that caused the delay in the death of Socrates.

This answer of the oracle is at once stated and very justly condemned in a vigorous argument by a recent author, who has composed a separate work on The Detection of

Impostors: to whose own words, and not mine, now listen, as he aims his stroke at the author of the response in the manner following:

[19] [Oenomaus]: 'What then? When the Athenians had caused the death of Androgeus, and suffered a pestilence for it, would they not have said that they repented? Or if they did not say so, would it not have been proper for you to say "Repent," rather than to say this?

“Of plague and famine there shall be an end,
If your own flesh and blood, female and male,
By lot assigned to Minos, you send forth
Upon the mighty sea, for recompense
Of evil deeds: so shall the god forgive.”

'I pass over the fact that you gods are indignant at the death of Androgeus at Athens, but sleep on while so many die in all places and at all times: though you knew that Minos at that time was master of the sea, and of mighty power, and all Hellas was paying court to him: he was therefore a lover of justice, and a good lawgiver, and seemed to Homer to be

"Frequent in converse close with mighty Zeus,"
and after death he became a judge in Hades: and you for this offence wouldst exact these penalties on his behalf!

'But I pass over these matters just as you gods do, and also the fact that after letting the murderers escape you commanded them to send the innocent to death, even sent them to a man whom you were about to exhibit as a judge of all mankind, but who in this very case knew not how to give judgement. And yet how many should you gods in justice send to the Athenians in place of these youths, whom you unjustly slew in revenge for Androgeus?'

[Eusebius]: This same writer, after recalling the story about the Heracleidae, counts up the number of persons whose death Apollo has caused by the ambiguity of his responses, in the following words.

[20] [Oenomaus]: 'But since I happen to have mentioned this subject, let me now relate the incidents of the narrative concerning the Heracleidae. For they once set out to invade the Peloponnese by way of the Isthmus, but failed in the attempt. So Aristomachus the son of Aridaeus, because his father had perished in the invasion, comes to you to learn about the way: for he was eager as his father had been. And you tell him,

"Heaven shows the way to victory through the straits."

'So he starts on the enterprise by way of the Isthmus, and is killed in battle. His son Temenus, unhappy son of hapless sire, was the third who came to you, and you gave the

same promise to him as to his father Aristomachus: and he said, "But my father trusted you, and perished in the invasion."

"Then you said, I do not mean "straits" on land, but on "the broad-bosomed," because, I suppose, it was difficult for you to say simply "by the sea." And he went by sea, after making them think that he was making his incursion by land, and he encamped midway between Navatus and Typaeum. He killed with his spear Carnus son of Phylander, an Aetolian knight, doing, as I think, quite rightly. And when a plague presently fell upon them, and Aristodemus died, they returned again, and Temenus came and complained of his failure, and was told that he had brought upon himself the penalty for the messenger of the god, and he heard the poem concerning his vow to the Carnean Apollo, which told him in the oracular answer,

"you suffer vengeance for my prophet's death."

"What then says Temenus? "What must I do? And how can I appease you?"

"To the Carnean god due honour vow."

'O most accursed, and most shameless prophet! Do you then not understand that he who hears the word "straits" will miss its meaning? Yet knowing this you none the less give this answer, and then look on at his mistake.

'But the word "strait" was ambiguous, and chosen in order that, if he were victorious, you might seem to be the cause of his victory; but, if defeated, not at all to blame for his defeat, being able to take refuge in "the broad-bosomed." But the man went on "the broad-bosomed," and did not succeed; and again, an excuse is found in the death of your messenger Carnus.

'Yet how, most noble god, didst you, to whom Carnus was so dear, bid him be inspired for others, but not for himself? And though you should have saved Carnus, who was but one, how didst you suffer him to die, and for his death didst bring an Homeric plague upon the multitude, and dictate vows for the plague?

'And if he had accomplished nothing by his vow, another excuse would have been found for your quibble, and you would never have ceased, they on their side inquiring, and you quibbling, so that whether they were victorious or defeated your malpractice would not have been detected. For their passion and eagerness were strong enough to mislead them, so as to make them not distrust you, even if they were to be slain a thousand times.

'To this it is worth while to add the story of Croesus. He reigned over Lydia, having received the government as it had come down to him from a long line of ancestors. Then hoping to succeed somewhat beyond his forefathers, he was minded to show piety towards the gods, and, after making trial of them all, he preferred the Apollo of Delphi, and proceeded to adorn his temple with bowls and ingots of gold, and a countless multitude of offerings, and made it in a short time the richest of all temples in the world; nor in his magnanimity did he omit all that sufficed for sacrifices.

'So after he had made such loans to the god, the Lydian king naturally felt confidence in his magnificent works of piety, and resolved to make an expedition against the Persians, expecting to increase his empire greatly by the alliance of the god.

'What then did the wonderful oracle-monger do? That very same Delphian, Pythian, friendly god contrives that his suppliant, his dear friend, his client should not only fail to win the foreign empire, but also be driven from his own, the god not doing this at all purposely, I think, but rather in ignorance of what was to happen: for surely it was not with any knowledge of the future (since he was no god nor any superhuman power) that he craftily contrived his response to suit either event, and with the seeming affirmation,

"The Halys crossed,

Croesus a mighty empire shall destroy,"

overturned the kingdom of Lydia which had come down from a succession of ancestors to the pious king, great and ancient as it was, and rendered to his favoured worshipper this fruit of his extreme zeal towards him.'

[Eusebius]: After this hear what indignation the writer not unreasonably utters.

[21] [Oenomaus]: 'It seems then that you do truly know all things that are worth no more than sand, but know nothing that is excellent. For example, that "the smell of a strong-shelled tortoise boiling should strike on your senses," is a piece of knowledge worth but sand, not being even true in itself, but nevertheless becoming to the braggart and the shameless, who looks supercilious over his empty bits of knowledge and tries to persuade Croesus the Lydian captive not to despise him.

'For he relying upon the trial (of the oracles), intended soon after to ask you whether he should make an expedition against the Persians, and to make you his adviser concerning his insane and grasping policy. And you didst not shrink from telling him, that

"The Halys crossed,

Croesus a mighty empire shall destroy."

'That certainly was well contrived, that it didn't matter to you, if he should suffer some strange disaster from being incited by an ambiguous oracle to attack a foreign empire, nor if certain bitter and malicious persons, instead of duly praising you for having driven a madman headlong, went so far as to accuse you of having uttered a phrase which was not even equally balanced, that the Lydian king might hesitate and take counsel; but they said that the word "καταλῦσαι" could be understood by the Greeks only in one way, not to be driven from his own empire, but to acquire the empire of another.

'For Cyrus, the semi-Mede or semi-Persian, or, as he was called in the riddle, "the mule," being of a royal race by his mother, but of an ordinary stock on his father's side, shows incidentally the inflated poetry, but especially the blind divination of the soothsayer, if he did not know that the riddle would be misunderstood.

'If, however, he was playing this way with him not from ignorance but from insolence and malice, heavens! how strange are the playthings of the gods. And if it was not this, but that the things must of necessity so happen, this is of all deceitful speeches the most wicked. For if it must so happen, why nevertheless do you, unhappy god, sit at Delphi chanting empty and useless prophecies? And of what use are you to us? And why are we so mad, who run to you from all quarters of the earth? And what right do you have to taste sacrifices?'

[Eusebius]: This plain speaking of Oenomaus in the Detection of Impostors is not free from cynical bitterness. For he will not admit that the oracles which are admired among all the Greeks proceed from a daemon, much less from a god, but says that they are frauds and tricks of human impostors, cunningly contrived to deceive the multitude. And since I have once mentioned these matters, there can be no objection to hearing other refutations also; and first, that in which the same author says that he had been himself deceived by the Clarian Apollo: he writes as follows:

[22] [Oenomaus]: 'But, indeed, I also must take some part in the comedy, and not pride myself on not having fallen into the common derangement; and I must tell of the bargain in wisdom, which I myself imported out of Asia, from you, O Clarian god:

"In the land of Trachis lie
your fair garden, Heracles,
Where all flowers for ever blooming,
Laden with perpetual dew,
Culled all day, yet ne'er diminish."

'Then I myself also, impotent fool that I was, became elated by the "Heracles," and the "garden of Heracles in its bloom," dreaming of a certain Hesiodic "sweat" because of the name Trachis, and on the other hand of an "easy" life because of the blooming garden.

'Then, on my inquiring further whether the gods were inclined to help me, some one of the multitude, swearing by the very gods that were to help, said that he certainly had heard that this very answer had been given from you to one Callistratus, a merchant of Pontus.

'When I heard this, what, think you, was my indignation, at being robbed by him of my "virtue"? But although dissatisfied I nevertheless began to inquire whether the merchant also had been at all flattered by the "Heracles." So then it appeared that he also was in some trouble, and was bent upon gain, and expecting from his gain some pleasant kind of life.

'So as it appeared that the merchant was no better treated than myself, I would no longer accept the oracle, nor the "Heracles," But disdained to share the same treatment,

when I saw the troubles that were actually present and the pleasures that existed only in hope.

'However, it appeared that none went without his share in the oracle, neither robber nor soldier, neither lover nor mistress, neither flatterer, nor rhetorician, nor sycophant. For of what each man desired, the trouble came first, while the joy was only expected.'

Having made these statements, he immediately adds, how after a second and third inquiry he found that the wonderful prophets knew nothing, but were concealing their own ignorance simply by the obscurity of their ambiguous language. So he speaks as follows:

[23] [Oenomaus]: 'But since my business was now so forward, and I wanted only a man to act as a stranger's guide to wisdom, and he was difficult to find, I asked you also to point out such an one:

"On Eupelians and Achaeans obligation he will lay,

And, if true, for his conjecture shall receive no little pay."

'What do you say? If I was desirous of becoming a sculptor or painter, and was seeking for teachers, was it sufficient for me to hear Ἐν τε τοῖσιν Εὐπέλευσιν, or rather should I not have said that the speaker was mad?

'This, however, you are perhaps not able to understand, for the characters of mankind are very obscure: but whither I had better travel from Colophon is no longer a matter so unintelligible to the god:

"When a man large stones project from a widely-whirling sling,

With the blows he slays grass-eating geese unutterably great."

'Now who will interpret for me what in the world is meant by these "grass-eating geese unutterably great"? Or the "widely-whirling sling"? Will Amphilochus, or the god of Dodona, or will you at Delphi, if I should come here? will you not go and hang yourself with your "widely-whirling sling," and take your unintelligible verses with you? '

But now, after such censures as these, it is time to observe again from the beginning how the same author confutes the most ancient oracular responses, those at Delphi, which are held in the very highest admiration in the histories of Greece.

'Vast was the Persian host in arms against the Athenians, nor was there any other hope of safety for them, except the god only. So they, not knowing who he was, invoked him as the helper of their forefathers. This was the Apollo at Delphi. What therefore did this wonderful deity do? Did he fight in defence of his friends? Did he remember the "libations and burnt offerings," and the customary honours which they paid to him in sacrificing their hecatombs? Not at all. But what did he say? That they should flee, and provide a wooden wall for their flight: thus indicating the navy, by means of which alone he said that they could be saved when their city was burned. O mighty help of a god!

'Then he pretends to foretell a siege not only of the other buildings in the city, but also of the very temples consecrated to the gods. But this was what all might expect from the invasion of the enemy, apart from any oracle.'

Very naturally therefore the writer again makes sport of this delusion of the Greeks, and censures it in the following words:

[24] [Oenomaus]: 'Perhaps, however, such answers as I have described are those of an intentional mischief-maker; shouldn't we instead bring forward for judgement his other answers which were given to the Athenians. So then let the responses to the Athenians be read:

"Wretches, why sit you here? Fly, fly to the ends of creation,
(Quitting your homes, and the crags which your city crowns with her
circlet.)

Neither the head, nor the body is firm in its place, nor at bottom
Firm the feet, nor the hands (nor rest the middle uninjured.
All—all ruined and lost). Since fire and impetuous Ares,
Speeding along in a Syrian chariot, hastes to destroy her.
Not alone shalt you suffer; full many the towers he will level,
Many the shrines of the gods he will give to a fiery destruction.
Even now they stand with dark sweat horribly dripping,
Trembling and quaking for fear."

'Lo! there you have the oracle that was given to the Athenians. Is there perchance anything prophetic in it? "Yes, surely," some one will say, "for you had so much confidence in him yourself: and this will be known, if you add what was further said to them when they asked him to help them." So then, let it be added:

"Pallas has not been able to soften the lord of Olympus,
Though she has often prayed him, (and urged him with excellent counsel).
Yet once more I address you in words than adamant firmer
When the foe shall have taken (whatever the limit of Cecrops
Holds within it, and all which divine Cithaeron shelters),
Then far-seeing Zeus grants this to the prayers of Athene;
Safe shall the wooden wall continue for you and your children;
Wait not the tramp of the horse, not the footmen mightily moving
Over the land, but turn your back to the foe, and retire you.
Yet shall a day arrive when you shall meet him in battle.
Holy Salamis, you shalt destroy the offspring of women,
When men scatter the seed, or when they gather the harvest."

'Your Zeus is worthy of himself, O son of Zeus! your Athena also is worthy of Athena, O brother of Athena! And this eagerness and counter-eagerness well become the father and the daughter, or rather the gods in general! And this ruler of Olympus, too weak to

destroy this one city without bringing against it that countless host from Susa, was a mighty god, having dominion over the world, and persuasive withal, as moving so many nations from Asia into Europe, but yet unable in Europe to overthrow one single city.

'And you too, the prophet so bold and so ready also to run needless risks for nothing, do you not cry pity? (so the men Blight say, on whose behalf "Pallas has not been able to soften the lord of Olympus"). Or was it that Zeus was angry not with the men, but with the stones and timber? And then were you to save the men, and he to burn the buildings with foreign fire? Because he had at the moment no thunderbolt?

'Or rather are we somewhat bold, and foolhardy in forbidding you gods to talk such nonsense? But how did you know, O prophet, that

"Holy Salamis shall destroy the offspring of women,"

But didst not further know whether it would be,

"When men scatter the seed, or when they gather the harvest"?

'And how knewest you not even this, that a man might say that "the offspring of women" were either those of his own kindred, or might say that they were "the enemies," if he scented the evil device?

'But we must wait for what will happen, for happen one or other of these must. For in truth "Salamis the holy" would not have been inappropriate even in case of defeat, as being called by such an epithet in compassion: and the naval battle that was to take place either

"When men scatter the seed, or when they gather the harvest,"

is beplastered with poetical bombast, in order that, by this artifice, the prediction might escape detection, and it might not be clearly seen at the moment, that a naval battle does not take place in winter.

'Now it is not difficult to see the stage-play, and the wheeling in of the gods, the one beseeching and the other refusing to yield, so useful for the coming event, and the unexpected turn of the war, the one if they should be saved, the other if they should be destroyed. For if they should be saved, behold! the prayers of Pallas have been foreshown, which were able to turn the anger of Zeus: or if not, even this result is not unprovided for by the prophet; for "Pallas is not able to soften Zeus." And to meet half-evil fortunes the artist mixed the oracle, as though Zeus had on the one hand fulfilled his own purpose, but on the other hand had not disregarded the request of his daughter.

'And as to the "towers," it might perhaps have been false that many would be destroyed, if they had attacked them with reeds instead of iron and fire, though in this case even with reeds so great an army could at all events have accomplished something. "But it was I," says he, "who discovered the wooden wall which alone could not be destroyed." Yes, it was your advice, but not a prophecy, not unlike that "Haste, oh! haste you away, nor blush to behave like a coward."

'He therefore who solved that riddle was as good as yourself in discerning that the city of the Athenians was the Persian's avowed cause for the invasion, and the whole

expedition was directed against this city first and chiefly. For even I myself, who am no prophet, should have discerned this, and bidden not only the Lydian king, but also the Athenians to turn their backs and flee. For "Yet shall a day arrive when you shall meet him in battle," for there come on "the tramp of the horse and the footmen mightily moving." Also that they must flee in ships, and not on the mainland: for it would have been ridiculous, as they had ships, and dwelt by the sea, not to have collected their goods in all haste, and put on board all the provisions they had, and made their escape, giving over the land to those who chose to take it.'

[Eusebius]: These then were the answers given to the Athenians: but those given to the Lacedaemonians were utterly weak and ridiculous. For either, says he, the whole city shall be besieged, or it shall mourn the loss of the king. From every circumstance, it was natural for any one to guess this, that either one or the other would happen.

But surely it was no divination of a god to use such ambiguity in ignorance of the future, when he should have given help, and appeared opportunely as saviour of the Greeks, and rather to have procured the victory over the enemies and barbarians for the Greeks, as his own friends. And if he had not power to do this, he should at least have provided that they should suffer no harm, and not be conquered. But even this he failed to do, no, he did not even know how the circumstances of their defeat would turn out. Wherefore on this point also hear how his censure is expressed.

[25] [Oenomaus]: 'But, you will say, one must not give the same advice to the Lacedaemonians. That is true. For you did not know, O sophist, as in the case of Attica, what course the affairs of Sparta would take. Therefore you wast afraid lest you shouldest bid them flee, and then they should flee, and the enemy never invade them.

'Since therefore it was necessary to say something, this is what you said to the Lacedaemonians:

"O habitants of Sparta's spacious streets,
Either your glorious city shall be sacked
By Perseus' warrior sons, or else a king
Sprung from the race of mighty Heracles
Must die, and all Laconia mourn his fate."

'Again there is the combination most unlike prophecy. However, let it pass, that we may not seem to be both wearisome and incompetent by trampling upon you twice for the same fault; but let us examine the remaining facts.

'In so great a danger all were looking to you, and you wast both their informant of the future, and their adviser as to present action. And while they believed you trustworthy, you wast sure that they were fools; and that the present opportunity was convenient for drawing on the simpletons, and driving them headlong, not only to the

schools of sophistry at Delphi and Dodona, but also to the seats of divination by barley and by wheat-flour, and to the ventriloquists.

'For at that time not only the gods were believed, but also cats and crows, and the delusions of dreams. It was not difficult therefore to see that they would neither have accepted both misfortunes rather than one, nor the greater instead of the less, and it was less that one, even their king, should fall instead of all.

'So then with the fall of the city there would be no escape for him either; but if he were posted somewhere else by himself, perhaps something unexpected might happen. The remaining course then was for those who reasoned thus to send the king to carry on the war, and stay at home themselves out of danger, awaiting the event.

'For him therefore, taking his stand with a few against that immense host, destruction was manifest; but Sparta had a respite from fear, and hopes of the unexpected: while the trick would be equally undetected, whether the city escaped or was captured.

'Why so? Because it had not been said that the city should be saved if the king died, but that either he should perish alone or the whole city together: and this answer could not be called to account in either case, whether he were to perish alone or not alone. Such is the fruit of arrogance and folly.'

Such was the course in this case. But it would not be right to pass by the answer which he gave to the Cnidians, when they offered vows and prayed for the alliance of the god.

[26] [Oenomaus]: 'The Cnidians also suffered something like this, when Harpagus made an expedition against them. For when they tried to cut through the Isthmus there and make their city an island, at first they stuck close to the work; but when they had to face the labour, they were for giving up and consulting the oracle. And you said to them:

"Fence not the isthmus off, nor dig it through:

Jove would have made an island, had he wished":

and the lazy cowards were persuaded, and turned back from the work, and gave themselves up to Harpagus. But mark the cunning trick: for since it was not certain that they would escape, even if they dug the trench, you didst stop them from this; but in not bidding them to continue the work, you do promise their escape.

'To this however you didst add, not that it was better for them not to dig it, but that it was not the pleasure of Zeus that it should be an island. So then in discouraging them the chances were evenly balanced; but in giving them encouragement the promise of escape preponderated: in this case then it was safe for the sophist to deter them. And so, without telling them anything of what they had come for, you sentedst them away with the idea that they had heard something good.'

[Eusebius]: Now I think these instances sufficiently convict the feebleness both of the givers and receivers of the responses, and that there is no truth or inspiration to be found in their declarations.

But you will see the mischievous disposition either of the evil daemons or of the men who played false with the divinations, if you learn how in the war of Greeks against each other they irritated those who consulted them, whereas they should have been arbiters of peace and friendship.

At one time, therefore, this Delphian god again irritates the Lacedaemonians, as if they were his friends and familiars, against the Messenians, and at another time gives an answer against the Lacedaemonians to the Messenians, if the latter should propitiate the daemons again by human sacrifice. Listen now to this story also.

Book 6

[7] [Oenomaus]: 'To think then that you should sit in Delphi unable, even should you wish it, to keep silence! So Apollo, the son of Zeus, now wishes, not because he wishes, but because he is ordained by necessity to wish! But since I have been led on, I know not how, into this argument, I am inclined to pass over all the rest, and inquire into a matter that is appropriate and well worth inquiry. For, so far as it depends on the philosophers, there has been lost out of human life, whether one likes to call it a rudder, or ballast, or foundation—there has been lost the governing power of our life, which we suppose to be absolute over the highest necessity; but Democritus, unless I am mistaken, and Chrysippus think to prove the noblest of man's faculties, according to the former, a slave, and according to the latter, half-enslaved. Their argument, however, is worth no more than a man can claim for the things of man: but if deity also now makes war upon us, good heavens, what will become of us?'

'But that is not likely nor just, if at least we may conjecture from these responses following:

"Hated of all your neighbours, belov'd of the blessed Immortals,
Sit you still, with your lance drawn inward, patiently watching."

""What then? says the Argive; if I should so wish, is it in my power, and can I, if it shall please me, sit still, patiently watching?" "It is in your power," you would'st say, "and you canst; or how should I have enjoined this on you?"

"Carystus, heir of noble Cheiron's race,
Forsake your native Pelion, and seek
Euboea's cape: there you are doomed to found
A sacred home. But haste, and tarry not."

'Is there then anything really dependent on man, O Apollo, and have I power to will to "forsake Pelion"? Yet surely I used to hear from many wise men, that if it is fated for me

to "seek Euboea's cape," and "found a sacred home," I shall both come here and settle, whether you tell me or not, and whether I should will it or not. If, however, there is any need for me also to will what necessity forces me to will even if I should be unwilling—but you, O Apollo, are more worthy to be believed, and so I am inclined to give heed rather to you:

"Tell you the Parians, Telesicles,
I bid you found in the Aerial isle
A city fair to view."

'Yes, surely' (some one will perhaps say in vain conceit, or to confute you), 'I shall tell them, even if you bid me not: for so it is fated: and the "Aerial isle" is Thasos, and the Parians will come to it, when my son Archilochus shall have explained to them, that this island was formerly called Aeria. I suppose therefore that you, being terrible in taking vengeance, will not bear with him, so ungrateful and audacious as he is, since if you hadst not chosen to inform him, he would never have given the message, nor would his son Archilochus have led the colony of Parians, nor would the Parians have inhabited Thasos.

'I know not therefore whether you say these things without knowing what you say. But since we seem to be at leisure to hold even a long conversation, and since the subject is of no slight importance, tell me this, for perhaps a few points out of many are sufficient.

'Are we, I and you, anything? You will say, Yes. But whence do we know this? Whereby did we determine that we do know it? Is it not the fact that nothing else is so satisfactory a proof (of our existence) as our conscious sensation and apprehension of ourselves?

'What again? How did we ever find out that we are animals? And how that among animals we are, as I should say, men, and among men one an impostor, and another an expositor of impostors; but as you wouldst say, the one a man, the other a god, and the one a prophet, the other a false accuser? And let it be as you say, if I be proved wrong.

'But how do we know that we are conversing at the present moment? What say you? Did we not rightly judge our apprehension of ourselves by that which is most immediate, the fact itself? Evidently so. For we found nothing else either higher than it, or prior to it, or more trustworthy.

'For if this is not to be so, then let not hereafter one named Alcmaeon come to you at Delphi, after he has slain his mother, and been driven from home, and is longing to return home. For he knows not either whether he himself is anything at all, nor whether he is driven from home, nor whether he is longing for home. But even if Alcmaeon is mad, and imagines things that do not exist, yet the Pythian god at least is not mad. And you must not speak to him in this way:

"How to return to your home you seek, son of Amphiaraus."

'For even you knowest not yet whether any son of Amphiaraus is consulting you, nor whether you, the consulted, are anything at all, and able to answer concerning the matters on which he consults you.

'Neither therefore let Chrysippus, the author of the semi-slavery, whatever that exactly is, attend in the Porch, nor think that those drivellers will attend there to listen to him, the Nobody: neither let him take his stand and struggle about nothing against Arcesilaus present in person, and Epicurus not present.

'For what Arcesilaus is, and what Epicurus, or what the Porch is, or what the young men, or what the Nobody, he neither knows nor can know; for he knows not even, what comes far earlier, whether he himself is anything.

'But neither will you gods nor Democritus endure that any one should talk in this way: for there is no more trustworthy criterion than that of which I speak; nor if there seem to be any others, could they be made equal to this, or, if made equal, could not surpass it.

'So then, some one may say, since you, O Democritus, and you, O Chrysippus, and you, O prophet, are indignant if any one should wish to deny your consciousness of yourselves—for of those many books of yours it is no longer possible to deny the existence—come, let us also be indignant on the other side.

'How, pray? Is this self-consciousness to be the most trustworthy and primary evidence wherever it pleases you? But where it pleases you not, is there some occult power, Fate, or Destiny, to tyrannize over it?—a power having for each of you a different meaning, proceeding according to one from god, and according to another from those minute bodies which are carried down, and tossed up, and twirled round, and broken up, and separated, and combined by necessity?

'For lo! the manner of our self-consciousness is the same in which we are also conscious of our voluntary or enforced actions. And we are not unconscious of the great difference between walking and being carried, or between choosing and being compelled.

'But do you ask the reasons for which I bring these matters into the discussion? Because you, O prophet, have failed to perceive things over which we have power, and you that knowest all things seemest not to know these which are fast moored to our own will.

'And it was evident that this would be the source of no little trouble: for he who knows not the source, which was the cause of the consequences, would be likely, I suppose, to know the consequences themselves!

'Evidently then he was an impudent prophet who foretold to Laius 15 that his son would kill him: for the son surely would be master of his own will, and neither any Apollo, nor any higher than he, would be able by any power to attain to a knowledge of things which neither exist at present, nor need ever come into existence.

'For surely the most ridiculous of all things is this, the mixture and combination of the two notions, that there is something in men's own power, and that there is

nevertheless a fixed chain of causation. For, as the wiser sort say, it is like the account in Euripides.

'For that Laius should choose to beget a child, was in the power of Laius himself, and this had escaped the notice of Apollo: But after he had begotten a son, there lay upon him an inevitable necessity of dying by his son's hand. In this way therefore the necessity dependent on the future event supplied to the prophet his presentiment of what would take place.

'But I suppose the son also, as well as the father, was master of his own will: and as the latter had the power of begetting or not, so the son had the power of slaying or not. Now this is the character of all your oracular answers: and this was that which the Apollo of Euripides said:

"And all your house shall wade through streams of blood:"

'Namely, that the son shall be blinded by his own hand, on account of the marriage with his mother and of the sovereignty to which he succeeded for his solution of the riddle; and that his sons shall fall by mutual slaughter, because of the banishment of the one from the kingdom, and the ambition of the other, and the marriage of the exile at Argos, and the expedition of seven ridiculous chieftains, and the battle: and since these things were separately dependent on many causes and powers, how could it be possible for you to understand, or for the chain of causes to bind them together?

'For if on the contrary Oedipus being his own master had not wished to reign, or, having wished and accomplished this, had not chosen to marry Jocasta, or after marrying had not been puffed up with pride, nor been desponding and disagreeable, how could the several events have been brought to pass? How could he have torn out his eyes? Or how could he have cursed his sons with the curse described by Euripides and you?

'In what way could the events which followed these have taken place, if there were no causes existing before you could'st tell anything about the future? And again, if the sons had agreed and reigned together, or if they had made an arrangement to reign by turns and adhered to the terms settled; or if he who was banished had determined to go off not to Argos but to Libya or to the Perrhaebi; or if after having arrived at Argos he had decided to be a salt-fish-monger, and not to take a rich wife but some poor workwoman or huckstress; or if Adrastus had not given him his daughter, or if he had given her, but Polynices had not desired to return home; or if, though desiring it, he had restrained himself; or if Adrastus had given no heed to his request for alliance in war; or if neither Amphiaraus nor Tydeus nor the several other commanders of divisions would follow Adrastus; or if, though they followed, Polynices on arriving had not fought with his brother, but either had reigned together with him by agreement, or, if he refused, had retired, being persuaded by what Euripides says:

"How foolishly you com'st thine home to sack;"

'Or if, not this one, but the other had listened to those other Euripidean subtleties:

"Are sun and night content to serve man's need,

And will you bear no equal in the house?"

'How in any such case could they have joined battle, "and all the house of Laius waded through blood"?

'However, these things, you will say, have come to pass. They have come to pass: but by what way didst you attain to the knowledge of them? do you not see how frequently the whole action of the play has been broken through by the power which lies in us who perform the action? And so I will take whatever supposed case you will, and cut across that chain of yours, and show that it is impossible.

'Yet you will say that you knowest the last links of the supposed case. Yes, but the whole case has been regulated by the force of our interruption of the chain.

'Or perhaps you do not understand what I mean? Yet in every supposed case, O prophet, there are the living beings often making either few or many fresh beginnings therein. And these beginnings having cut across the events preceding them always themselves bring others on: and these latter may proceed as long as no other beginning supervenes from any source, commanding the events which come after it to conform not to those which went before but to itself.

'Now such afresh beginning may be either an ass, or a dog, or a flea. For surely, by Apollo! you will not rob even the flea of his free will: but the flea will act upon a certain impulse of his own, and being sometimes mixed up with human affairs will make himself the commencement of some new course; and you are unconsciously consulting this kind of animal.

"Trachis, the home of godlike Heracles,
you have destroyed, O Locrian ; and on you
Zeus hath sent curses, and shall yet send more."

'What say you? Had it not then been destined by you gods to be destroyed? And why are we mortals to blame, and not that necessity of yours? you doest not justice, O Apollo, nor are right in laying the punishment upon us who do no wrong.

'And this Zeus of yours, I mean the necessity of your necessity, why does he take vengeance upon us, and not upon himself (if he must punish some one), for having shown the necessity to be of such a character? And why does he also threaten us? Or why, as if we were the masters of this event, do we suffer famine for it? Moreover it will either be rebuilt by us, or not; and whichever it may be, this has been fixed by fate.

'Stop therefore from your wrath, O Zeus, the lord of famine: for that which has been destined will be, and that is what your chain has been appointed to do: and we are nothing compared to it. And you too stop, Apollo, from uttering vain oracles: for just that which will be, will be, even though you keep silence. And what is to be done to us, O Zeus and Apollo, who are not at all the causes of your enactment of law, enactment, that is, of necessity. Or what have we to do with your threatened curses, which yourselves deserve to bear for what we were compelled by necessity to do? "Oeteans, rush not in blind frenzy on."

'Why, Apollo, we are not "rushing on," but are being driven, and not by "blind frenzy," but by that necessity of yours.

'And how is it, O Apollo, that you praisest that famous Lycurgus, who was not virtuous either willingly or by choice, but unwillingly? That is if a man can be virtuous unwillingly. But what you do now is just as if one were to praise and honour those who are beautiful in body, but to blame and punish the ugly.

'For the wicked might justly say to you, You did not permit us, O you gods, to become virtuous; and not only so, but you even forced us to be wicked. And as to the virtuous, if they walk about with their elbows stuck out, one will not permit it, but will say to them, O Chrysippus and Cleanthes and the rest of your band, since you have been made to be virtuous, I give praise to virtue, but no praise to you in whom virtue resides.

'No, even Epicurus, against whom you, Chrysippus, so often railed, I acquit of the charges, so far at least as you can judge. For how is he to blame, who was not of his own accord luxurious or unjust, as you so often reproached him?

"Well ordered lives the gods approving view,
And welcome holy offerings of the just."

'Now it seems to me that you gods would not say this, unless you were persuaded that men seek the objects of their pursuit not involuntarily but with a will: and after what has been already proved, no sophist either divine or human will dare to say that whatever men will is ordained by fate: or else we shall no longer use reasoning with him, but take a stout strap, as for an unruly boy, and curry his ribs right well.'

[Eusebius]: This is the manner in which Oenomaus denounced the soothsayer. And if you do not like this kind of argument, yet take and read the extracts from the other philosophers concerning fate, which are fit to overthrow not only the oracles that have already been quoted, but also generally all the other contrivances in defence of the dogma.